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MEDICAL RESERVE CORPS REVIEW

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Upcoming Events and Training

Missouri Public Health Advisory Committee. June 20, 2006 in Jefferson City, MO. Sponsored by the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services. For more information, contact Sharlet Howren at howres@dhss.mo.gov.

Kansas City MEDS/POD Mass Dispensing Exercise. June 22, 2006 in Liberty, MO. Sponsored by the Clay County Health Center. For more information, contact Karen Whitlow at whitlowk@arckc.org.

Topics in Public Health Preparedness. July 20-21, 2006 in Lake Tahoe, CA. Sponsored by the UCLA Center for Public Health and Disasters. Includes one-day workshops on Conducting a Hazards Risk Assessment and Risk Communication: Working in a Joint Information Center. For more information, visit www.cphd.ucla.edu/.

2006 NACCHO Annual Conference. July 26-28, 2006 in San Antonio, TX. Sponsored by the National Association of City and County Health Officials (NACCHO). For more information, call (202) 783-5550 or visit the organization's website at: <http://www.naccho.org/conferences/NACCHOannual06/>.

Topics in Public Health Preparedness. July 20-21, 2006 in Lake Tahoe, CA. Sponsored by the UCLA Center for Public Health and Disasters. Includes one-day workshops on Conducting a Hazards Risk Assessment

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and Risk Communication: Working in a Joint Information Center. For more information, visit www.cphd.ucla.edu/.

Missouri Public Health Volunteers Symposium. August 24, 2006 in Jefferson City, MO. Sponsored by the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services. For more information, contact Sharlet Howren at howres@dhss.mo.gov.

Northeast Missouri MRC Participates in Emergency Response Exercise

On April 27, 2006, Northeast Missouri MRC volunteers participated in a functional emergency response exercise in Kirksville, MO. The exercise scenario—on the anniversary of the 1899 tornado that leveled half of Kirksville—involved a tornado impacting the community. The Adair County Ambulance District, the MRC's primary staging area, became incident staging. Approximately 15 members of the Novinger/Northern Volunteer Fire Department were on hand with apparatus to deploy with MRC volunteers to two incident scenes.

MRC volunteers, carrying MRC-issued backpacks, arrived at the staging area and signed in. Divided into two crews, MRC members deployed with the fire apparatus to incident scenes on the north and south sides of town. Both incidents were large buildings with structural collapse and trapped victims. According to the exercise scenario, one team had livestock roaming nearby, since a sale barn was one of the collapsed

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structures (teams discussed their emergency response actions on site).

MRC volunteers were divided into strike teams once they reached the scene. CERT-trained MRC volunteers were utilized as part of Search and Rescue teams, while medical staff attended to the victims (the Northeast Missouri MRC sponsors Search and Rescue classes for MRC volunteers, both medical and non-medical, who are interested, and as a recruitment and sustainability tool). Two members of the Adair County Sheriff's Department, including the Sheriff and one deputy, deployed with each unit and discussed the law enforcement perspective. Once volunteers talked through the incident, each team returned to staging for debriefing and signing out.

The exercise was extremely valuable, and provided the participating emergency response agencies with an opportunity for some "face time" with MRC volunteers. In addition, the exercise resulted in several "lessons learned" for the Northeast Missouri MRC, including:

1. Issue identification numbers to MRC volunteers (as the fire service does). The Northeast Missouri MRC will begin making identification cards for volunteers to carry. The identification cards will include volunteers' registration numbers, which will begin with a "10--" so that other agencies will immediately recognize MRC members over the radio or on sign-in.
2. Carry permanent markers. If triage tags are unavailable, you can write on a victim's body with a permanent marker (and with the "click" type, you only need to use one hand).
3. Currently, the Northeast Missouri MRC has only required IS-100 or IS-700 for its volunteers. As a result of the exercise, they are considering requiring CPR or at least a Basic First Aid class for each member.
4. A large number of first responders are members of the Northeast Missouri MRC. Although these people do not have medical licenses, they do have basic medical experience and the ability to do almost as much medically as an EMT. In an emergency situation where the MRC unit may be short-handed, these first responders could be utilized in a number of ways, both medical and non-medical. The Northeast Missouri MRC is considering ways to properly categorize these volunteers, and at the same time utilize their medical skills. Currently, these volunteers

receive a yellow cap marked SUPPORT, along with other non-medical volunteers in support roles. Northeast Missouri MRC physicians have red caps marked DR; nurses have green caps marked LPN/RN; EMTs have navy caps marked EMT; paramedics have burgundy caps marked MEDIC; and mental health specialists have light blue caps marked MH. A new category for these medically-trained but unlicensed support volunteers might also include individuals who have EMT/paramedic experience, but also have expired licenses. The Northeast Missouri MRC is looking for ways to resolve this issue and is open to suggestions from MRCs across the region.

5. Have triage tags issued to MRC volunteers for use until the mass casualty trailer arrives.
6. Include duct tape on the list of items for volunteers to include in their backpacks (the MRC unit furnished medical supplies for the exercise, but otherwise it is up to the volunteers to stock their own MRC backpacks).
7. Appoint a Transportation Officer. This person could transport volunteers to the field if the Logistics Section at an incident is unable to find transportation for the MRC unit's volunteers. The Transportation Officer could also be responsible for pulling the ambulance district's mass casualty trailer to the field.
8. Find opportunities to work with the community's emergency response agencies, especially the rural agencies. Whether it's training or a social mixer, these activities provide essential "face time" between personnel of all agencies. Many rural firefighters still do not have a clear understanding of what the MRC does, despite the fact that the MRC coordinator attends the Fire Chiefs Association meetings and other events. The Northeast Missouri MRC plans to develop a packet for fire chiefs to give them information about the MRC unit and their capabilities. In addition, the Northeast Missouri MRC's next meeting on May 11, 2006 will feature a "Chiefs Panel." The sheriff, police chief and a number of fire chiefs from around the area will have the opportunity to meet the MRC volunteers, tell them about their jurisdictions, and ask questions about the MRC unit. Likewise, the MRC volunteers will be able to ask

questions of the emergency response agency chiefs.

According to Carmen Stanton, Northeast Missouri MRC coordinator, one fire chief commented on how "fantastic" the MRC volunteers were and thought they all worked really well together. In addition, an Assistant Fire Chief stated that the MRC unit "was better organized than the fire service!" Carmen says she's not sure about that, but it was nice to hear! According to Carmen, the exercise was a terrific learning experience for the Northeast Missouri MRC.

MRC Unveils Core Competencies

At the 2006 MRC National Leadership and Training Conference in April, the MRC unveiled eight basic core competencies for MRC volunteers. These core competencies were developed in conjunction with the National Association of City and County Health Officials (NACCHO) and were reviewed by representatives of the MRC program at the local, state and national levels. The use of these core competencies by local MRC units is completely voluntary; they are not meant to change or replace existing unit training requirements. According to NACCHO's core competencies fact sheet, "the goal of this project [was] to develop a core set of competencies for MRC volunteers, laying the groundwork for future training and development activities of the program." These core competencies are very broad and are applicable to MRC volunteers in any unit across the country. MRC volunteers with medical licenses and related credentials must meet the training requirements of their licensing and credentialing organizations. The MRC Core Competencies include:

- Describe the procedure and steps necessary for the MRC member to protect health, safety and overall well being of themselves, their families, the team and the community.
- Document that the MRC member has a personal and family preparedness plan in place.
- Describe the chain of command (e.g., emergency management systems, ICS, NIMS), the integration of the MRC, and its application to a given incident.
- Describe the role of the local MRC unit in public health and/or emergency response and its application to a given incident.

- Describe the MRC member's communication role(s) and processes with response partners, media, general public, and others.
- Describe the impact of an event on the mental health of the MRC member, responders, and others.
- Demonstrate the MRC member's ability to follow procedures for assignment, activation, reporting and deactivation.
- Identify limits to own skills, knowledge and abilities as they pertain to MRC role(s).

For more information on the core competencies, visit <http://www.naccho.org/topics/emergency/documents/MRCFactSheetApril20064.pdf>.

MRC Releases Pandemic Influenza Planning Guidance

The MRC has developed pandemic influenza planning guidance for local MRC units. The *Pandemic Influenza Planning Guidance for Medical Reserve Corps Units* identifies specific activities MRC units can do now to prepare for such an event. It provides a broad range of pandemic influenza planning and response actions that can be adapted and used by MRC units nationwide. MRC leaders and volunteers play an important role in building on existing public health infrastructure in their communities and will likely provide support in the event that this country is faced with the reality of an influenza pandemic. Today, many MRC units have begun the pandemic influenza planning process and have identified their roles and responsibilities in the event of an influenza pandemic. This guidance will help MRC units determine pandemic influenza planning and response actions that are in the purview, scope, training and capabilities of the units and the communities which they serve.

The *Pandemic Influenza Planning Guidance for Medical Reserve Corps Units* is posted on the MRC website at <http://www.medicalreservecorps.gov/POUpdates/PandemicFluGuidance>. It is also linked at the federal government's pandemic influenza website, www.pandemicflu.gov, under the "Community Planning" and "Health Care Planning" tabs, as well as from "Health & Safety" on the left side navigation panel (for Health Professionals). The MRC is also included in the dictionary on this website.